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AUTHOR van Naerssen, Margaret M.
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ABSTRACT

This study was undertaken to support the approach of teaching natural language and to illustrate what linguistic research can say to foreign language textbook developers and classroom teachers. The reality of oral conversational Spanish, as illustrated by research in language acquisition, sociolinguistics, and historical linguistics, is one in which the periphrastic future is preferred over the inflected for the expression of the simple future. However, this is not reflected in most texts where it has either been treated as an aside or has been ignored. It is suggested that teachers and textbook/curriculum developers need to examine their instructional goals. If the primary goal is to teach oral communication skills, and if one is committed to a grammatical sequence, students should, at an early age, be formally introduced to the periphrastic future as the most common means of expressing the future in conversation. If one is opposed to using a grammatically based syllabus, students should at least be exposed early in language usage to the more common means of expressing the future. This study illustrates the way a cross-disciplinary approach can identify the most appropriate and useful language for second language learners to acquire. (JK)

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Ignoring the Reality of the Future in Spanish

Margaret M. van Naerssen
Department of Linguistics
University of Southern California
Los Angeles, California

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Inspite of the textbooks, beginning students in Spanish as a foreign language somehow figure out that the easiest way to talk about the future is to use ir + a + the infinitive, or the Periphrastic Future. It is convenient to speculate that this is influenced by the first language of the student especially if the language has a similar construction such as going to + Verb in English. However, if this situation is examined in more depth, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that this is also the "natural" form in conversation for even native speakers of Spanish. This makes one wonder why textbooks, and the teachers who adhere closely to them, ignore the reality of natural language in teaching the future.[1]

However, this study was not done for the primary purpose of pointing out this particular incongruity for Spanish. Rather it was done to support the approach of teaching natural language and to illustrate what linguistic research can say to foreign language textbook developers and classroom teachers. While it is important to heed the warning by Tarone, Swain and Fathman (1976) regarding proceeding too rapidly with the interpretation of research results, such results are at least worth considering where there is a convergence of tendencies being reported from various disciplines such as psycho-, socio- and historical linguistics. This does appear to be the case for the Periphrastic Future in Spanish. Thus, while the title may suggest a rather narrow focus, I feel that similar cross-disciplinary research for other constructions in Spanish (and in other languages) will yield useful insights for teachers and contribute to theoretical concerns in language acquisition and to the search for universal tendencies in linguistics.[2]

The Inflected and Periphrastic Futures are contrasted below. While both the Periphrastic and the Inflected forms can express various modalities and functions, the focus of this study is on the expression of simple future action.

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Inflected Future: cantaré (will sing)
Vb. 1st p.s. future

Periphrastic Future: voy a cantar
Vb. 1st p.s. present Prep. Inf.

Psycholinguistics-language acquisition

Let us first examine first language acquisition data. Oral evidence of being able to distinguish between the present and future appears in Gonzalez's Spanish first language data as early as 2;6 (1970). This early age is confirmed by Peronard (1977) who observed it in her earliest recording at 2;11. In both studies only the Periphrastic Future appeared. The "official" or grammatical future, the Inflected Future, does not appear in first language studies until about age 4. Gili Gaya (1972) reports it at 4;0 and Gonzalez at 4;6 with only one instance in each study. Brisk (1972) does not note its use at all even at age 5;0.

At the primary grade level Gili Gaya reports only 5 cases of the Inflected Future, denoting future action, in the first grade, and only a few more in the fourth grade. (The Inflected Future only represented 2.10% of the expressions involving tense.) The expression of future tense is done normally, according to Gili Gaya, among children by means of the Present Indicative or Subjunctive along with the periphrastic construction (which is inflected the the Present). (See several examples below.)

Present +Temporal Adverb

Mañana traigo flores para ponerlas en el florero
T. Adv. Verb

Subjunctive +Periphrastic Future

Te manda decir Amparo que quando vayas te va a dar una pela
Subj. Periphr.

(Gili Gaya 1972)

For Kernan and Blount (1966) the Inflected Future is not established until 11-12 years of age.

Vidal de Battini (1964), in making recommendations for Spanish language arts in Argentina, provides additional indirect evidence of the dominant use of the Periphrastic Future. He recommends teaching the use of the Future form, i.e. the Inflected, in place of the periphrastic forms which are commonly used.

Thus cognitively the child can distinguish very early between present and future time and finds a form of expressing this through means other than the "official" grammatical or Inflected Future.

Sociolinguistics-general language usage

This form is found in the language around him/her, in older sibling speech, in motherese, and in adult speech in general. The teaching recommendation made by de Battini and evidence from a sampling of foreign language texts indicates, for the most part, that the Inflected Future is considered the more educated of the two forms, but data from adult speech indicates that the Inflected Future is not the most common form, thus it is not surprising that the child learning Spanish as a first language should acquire it so late. Dialect studies from Argentina (de Battini,1964), Chile (Croz, 1964), Colombia (Flores, 1964), Mexico (Lope Blanch, 1964 and Moreno de Alba, 1970), Venezuela (Iuliano, 1976) and in more general descriptions (Kany, 1963) also indicate thzt in the Spanish of the Americas the Inflected Future is not the preferred oral form.

A very detailed analysis of the uses of the Periphrastic Future in the educated speech of Caracas, Venezuela, was made by Rosalba Iuliano (1976). There were 627 occurences of the future of which 77% (481) were of the perphrastic form. This construction was used to express an immediate or more probable or real future.[3] The remaining 23% (146) were of the Inflected Future form which carried a certain hypothetical sense. See the examples below for distinctions in meaning:

Periphrastic Future (simple, immediate)
El va a poder sacar el año que viene petróleo.
(Next year he will be able to take out petroleum.)

Inflected Future (hypothetical)
Yo no sé qué estilo tendrá esa gente.
(I don't know what style those people have.)
(Iuliano 1976)

When the data was examined by age group, an increase was noted in the use of the Periphrastic Future among the younger speakers. (See the chart below.)

Frequency of Future		Periphrastic	Inflected
Youngest	I	52%	29%
	II	35%	38%
Oldest	III	13%	33%

(Iuliano 1976)

This could be interpreted as evidence of the Periphrastic Future replacing the Inflected.[4]

Historical linguistics

This tendency of the Inflected Future to be replaced by the Periphrastic form is more than an isolated tendency when observed from a historical perspective. Givón (1971) suggests that it is part of a larger cycle that Spanish and certain other languages are experiencing. The cycle (noted by other linguists as well) is one of the language going from a primarily synthetic language to a predominantly analytic language and eventually back to a synthetic one. Givón suggests an endless cycle which can be best understood if one looks at the syntactic order and the transformation structure of a language at various periods. One of his numerous examples is the expression of the future in Spanish. He points out that the syntactic order of early Latin as well as all early Indo-European dialects was Complement: Verb in their verb phrases. It is a well-known fact that many modality morphemes in Romance languages that appear as verb suffixes had their origins as main verbs. The Spanish Inflected Future has its origins in the Infinitive + the Inflected Verb haber, as illustrated below:

Infinitive	+	Inflected Verb haber
COMPLEMENT		VERB
cantar	+	he (1 p.s.)---cantaré
cantar	+	has (2 p.s.)---cantarás
cantar	+	ha (3 p.s.)---cantará
cantar	+	hemos (1p.p.)---cantaremos
cantar	+	han (3 p.p.)---cantarán

cantar 'sing'

Gradually the SUBJECT:COMPLEMENT:VERB word order of Romance languages evolved into a primarily SUBJECT:VERB:COMPLEMENT order which is currently a controlling force in Romance languages. The recently developed modals in these languages appear as

prefixed to the verb, for example the future marker ir (go) in the Spanish Periphrastic Future. This holds true for other "auxiliaries" as well: andar, llegar, and haber.

Givón summarizes his hypothesis as follows:

> Can a language remain forever purely isolating, agglutinating or analytic? The answer is no. This paper suggests the existence of an endless cycle, An isolating situation in which free lexical morphemes are arranged by synchronic syntax . . . eventually gives rise to an agglutinating situation in which some of th erstwhile free lexemes have become bound affixes...Once a morpheme has become bound, i.e. once the boundary between it and the 'stem' has been erased, the rules of phonology, both those of assimilation as well as those constraining the morpheme structure, begin to operate at the interphase between stem and affix, with the eventual attrition of affixes, eventually to the point of complete fusion with the stem. The language is then said to be 'analytic,' i.e. the erstwhile syntactic underlying structure has become completely the internal semantic structure of single lexical items.
> (Givón, 1971, p. 411)

Thus evidence from the study of language change supports dialect studies that report a recent spread of the Periphrastic Future in Spanish.

There is probably a psychological or cognitive point reached in languages at which there is an overload of isolating forms or of synthetic forms. Perhaps this is related to memory (for storage of separate words, word length, and phrase length in oral speech). This overloading could trigger a tendency to begin a shift in the cycle. Fleischmann[5] observed that this might be occuring with periphrastic forms in certain dialects in Panama and Mexico.

Sociolinguistics-conversation management

Perhaps there is also the influence of human interaction in the choice of forms that dominate at any particular stage in a language. Elinor Ochs proposes that the linguistic community give greater status to social processes as constraints on grammatical structures. She chooses to discuss the effect of human interaction on word order (left dislocation[6] in oral Italian).

> We find that word order, in particular the initial position, is sensitive to social interaction in two ways. First, word order is shaped by social interaction, in the sense that the initial item should be socially warranted. Second, word order is a shaper of subsequent social interaction. The initial item in an utterance can determine who will speak next, who will occupy the next turn. These functions of word order can be as important and in some cases, more important than the functions of encoding inherently salient information. (Elinor Ochs, 1971, p. 20)

Perhaps, in addition to word order, verb form choice could be suggested, at least for Spanish, as evidence of the influence of social processes at work.

Ochs examined her data from the viewpoint of conversation management. A similar approach was applied in this study to the choice between the Periphrastic and Inflected Future forms.[7]

Two assumptions will first have to made for which there is some support.

1. It is assumed that in at least oral speech, the Inflected Future tends to carry a +doubt, +certainty or + hypothetical semantic feature as opposed to the Periphrastic Future which has a +definiteness, +certainty, +immediacy and reality features. Iuliano observes this [illegible] as well as do numerous grammars when teaching the Future of Probability using the Inflected Future.

2. It is assumed that also in normal daily conversation the simple, immediate future meaning is expressed more frequently than the hypothetical, less probable future meaning. Iuliano's implies this in the significantly higher percentage of use of the periphrastic temporal future constructions as well as does the language development data cited previously.

Now to apply the principles of conversation management, with a word of caution. These principles were developed for English and probably have variations in application across languages and cultures. No detailed conversation management analyses appear to be available for Spanish.[8]

It is proposed that:

> The Periphrastic Future construction is, in current Spanish, easier to use in conversations than the Inflected Future as it can better perform the additional function of being able to fill a gap as the speaker plans his/her thoughts, thus allowing the speaker to hold the floor.

In current theory of conversation management, as suggested by Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974), two of the five main requirements for successful turn-taking are:

1. Only one person talks at once.
2. The gaps between turns are brief.[10]

For English speakers, according to Goodwin (1975) there is a horror of having a gap during one's turn: address tags and "um's" and "uh's" are added along with other devices to "drag it out."

In English it has been observed that a change of speaker most commonly occurs at transistionally relevant spaces such as at the end of a sentence, a phrase or a clause rather than in the middle.

The Periphrastic Future, by its construction, offers two advantages over the Inflected Future for helping to prevent the speaker from losing a turn:

1. It is a longer construction than the synthetic Inflected Future, thus not offering a transitionally relevant space (trs) as quickly.

   (trs) ir + a + (infinitive) (trs)

And perhaps more important,

2. It more easily allows the speaker to plan ahead both for the rest of that phrase and subsequent speech:

   a. The speaker can start out in the present time conceptually, the easiest position (the here and now) with the ir + a + (infinitive) as this expression of the future is inflected for the present tense.

      It might also be remembered that the other common replacement for the Inflected Future, at least in child language, is the Present Indicative with a temporal adverb.

   b. The speaker does not have to commit him/herself to a specific verb complement, the infinitive, immediately. Whereas, with the Inflected Future it would be necessary to both inflect for the future and choose a specific verb simultaneously.

Also from the field of sociolinguistics we have another hypothesis by Elinor Ochs that seems applicable here. She proposes that

> Adult speech behavior takes on many of the characteristics of child language when communication is spontaneous and relatively unpredictable. (Ochs Keenan, 1977)

This hypothesis includes reliance more on earlier acquired structures than on the the later acquired ones.[11] And, as has been mentioned previously, the Periphrastic Future is acquired much earlier than the Inflected Future.

The fit between textbooks and reality

The reality of oral conversational Spanish, as illustrated by research in language acquisition, sociolinguistics and historical linguistics is one in which the Periphrastic Future is preferred over the Inflected for the expression of the simple future concept. This reality is not, however, reflected in most texts. As it was claimed in the beginning of this paper, the Periphrastic Future has been generally ignored in texts. It has been, for the most part, treated in grammar texts as a second-class citizen, as a footnote, an aside, and even sometimes totally ignored.

This treatment came rather as a surprise to this writer, having been a student of Spanish as a foreign language herself, who assumed that somewhere along the way, very early, she had formally been taught the Periphrastic Future. And perhaps she had, in a brief note in the book or on the blackboard, and because of its naturalness it was incorporated into her Spanish as the easiest way to express the Future. In fact, in an analysis of this writer's Spanish it would probably become evident that she may even avoid the Inflected Future. The use of the Inflected Future as an expression of certain modalities has not yet been acquired by this writer although she knows the rule. Furthermore in actual analyses of foreign/second language learners of Spanish for college-age students (van Naerssen, in progress) and primary grade immersion students (Boyd, 1975) there is also support for a definite preference for the Periphrastic Future.[12]

The second class citizen treatment of the Periphrastic Future came to light in an examination of 16 textbooks for the ways in which students were taught to express the simple future concept. These textbooks are or have been (with the exception of one) widely used in the United States for teaching Spanish as a foreign language and reflect a variety of teaching methodologies. Below is a summary of the results of this analysis.

Comparison of the Treatment of the Inflected and Periphrastic Futures in Sixteen Spanish Foreign Language Texts-Summary

When Inflected Introduced	When Periphrastic Introduced	Formal Lesson on Inflected	Formal Lesson on Periphrastic
Early Late 2 (13%) 13 (81%) Never 1 (.06%)	Early Late 12 (75%) 2 (13%) Never 2(13%) Sometimes note repeated under Inflected lesson	15 (94%)	4 (25%)

Periphrastic Only as a Note	Exercises on Inflected	Exercises on Periphrastic
10 (63%)	15 (94%)	10 (63%) Once only in a dialog; freq. mixed with other construction and only a few sentences

Seventy-six percent (13) of the texts introduce the expression of the future early,[14] simultaneously with or shortly after the Present Indicative and before the Preterite, and in almost all cases it is is the Periphrastic form, but in almost all of these cases it is introduced only as a note, sometimes a one-liner, under some other morphological or syntactic category. In two texts it is never mentioned at all. Whereas, the Inflected Future is formally introduced in all but one text (it is omitted in one) as a separate lesson on the future, though generally late in the text or text series. Thus formal recognition is given to the less preferred, less frequent, more difficult, and more semantically complex structure as the "acceptable" form of the future. And the allocation of the Periphrastic Future to primarily notes suggests that one of the most frequent and easiest means of expressing the simple future is really not as "acceptable," not worth much notice. The fact that it seems to be easier to use may justify less space/time for explanation and practice, but that does not then justify lowering its level of acceptability by not formally recognizing it.

Implications

What are the implications of this convergence of data supporting the use of the Periphrastic Future as one of the primary means of expressing the simple future (the other being the Present Indicative + Temporal Adverb)?

Perhaps it would be expecting too much of the Spanish-speaking academic world community to confer on the periphrastic construction, overnight, the primary label of the Future or even the Simple Future and reclassify the inflected construction according to its various modalities (such as is done in some texts for the Future of Probability). But minimally there could be an "equal rights amendment": both forms could carry a modifier in their label describing their form which would at least equalize them. Thus there would officially be:

1. Inflected Future
2. Periphrastic Future

But it is more important to look at the instructional implications. Language acquisition research can try to tell us what the "natural" order of acquisition is for first language learners and what the "natural" order of difficulty is for second language learners. It can also try to describe the processes of acquisition and learning. But as Fathman has pointed out (1979) there is still debate as to whether the order of difficulty is the order in which structures should be introduced in foreign language classrooms. Some would argue for teaching the most difficult first in order to allow more time for practice. But as Turner (1979) and others have suggested the order of presentation does not seem to affect significantly the order of difficulty.

However, when acquisition research results are compared with data on tendencies for change, on actual language usage by both adult and child native speakers, and on the influence of human interaction on language usage; and when all point to the same structure, there is a strong argument for recognizing early on in the instructional process the language that is most natural and frequent, and therefore useful, to the second/foreign language learners' needs.

Teachers and textbook/curriculum developers then need to examine their instructional goals. If the primary goal is to teach for oral communication skills, and if one is committed to a grammatical sequence, then it is recommended that very early in the instructional sequence student be introduced formally (not as a footnote or an aside) to the Periphrastic Future (along with the Present + Temporal Adverb and possibly several other periphrastic forms) as the most common means of expressing the future in conversation. And if one is opposed to using a grammatically based syllabus, then students should be at least exposed early in language usage to these more common means of expressing the future. Cognitively and practically there should be no reason to formally delay introducing or teaching this function until more difficult constructions are taught (although the Inflected Future, with its various functions could be delayed). The apparent ease of learning this construction, however, suggests that little time probably need to be spent on reviewing it periodically. Spending little time on it is what most textbooks have been doing, but for the wrong reasons. Some have even totally ignored it. However, it is felt that in this paper sufficient socio-, psycho- and historical linguistic data has been provided to support the existence of the Periphrastic Future as a primary psychological and social reality.[15]

And, an even more significant result of this study has been to illustrate the way a cross-disciplinary approach can be used to identify the most appropriate and useful language for second/foreign language learners to acquire.

FOOTNOTES

1. A number of persons in second/foreign language teaching have been advocating the teaching of more natural language in the classroom. While the intuition of the materials/curriculum writer has some validity, materials based on solid sociolinguistic research will produce even more appropriate materials. It is not the intention of this writer to suggest that no one else is concerned about this issue; rather, it is intended that this study further support such directions.

2. This writer did a similar cross-disciplinary analysis of the relative clause in English, one version of which is"Applying research: Can and should relative clauses be taught?" A paper given at the TESOL Convention, Boston, Massachusetts, Feb. 27-March 4, 1979. A more detailed examination is in an earlier study (unpublished), "The relative clauses in planned and unplanned written discourse," University of Southern California, Linguistics Department, Winter, 1978.

3. Iuliano defines the modifier ir with a double meaning as follows: "Cuando los verbos de movimiento funcionan como auxiliantes de una perfrasis, sufren un proceso de gramaticalización tan sólo parcial: casi siempre conservan el sema de "deplazamiento,: aunque proyectando no ya en el espacio sino en el tiempo."
   "los maestros no quieren ir a trabajar al interior." (Iuliano, 1976, p. 64)

4. Iuliano does not specify ages in her paper except to indicate that the youngest would be 25 years old. It is assumed that her grouping of I, II, III is by increasing age based on a statement elsewhere that the distribution represents an expansion in the use of this construction. She only refers to the order as generational groups (grupos generacionales). There is insufficient evidence in her study to make the assumption that in the youngest group there was an absolute complementary distribution of forms by meaning.

   This data could also be a beginning point for a discussion of the issue of attention to speech (attitudes towards correctness) changing with age that Labov observes. The data could also raise motivational questions such as the willingness to or interest in hypothesizing or admitting doubt vs. a definiteness about issues. However, without much more speaker and contextual information such discussions would only produce interesting speculations.

5. Personal communication, Suzanne Fleischmann, University of California, Berkeley.

6. Left dislocation occurs when a word is moved out of its regular word order (when not in the initial position) to the initial position, to topicalize, for emphasis. For example: The business belongs to my father → My father, the business belongs to my father (him).

7. There may also an oral vs. written and/or planned vs. unplanned and/or formal/vs. informal distinction(s) involved here in the verb choice; however, no discourse analyses of written texts along these planes appear to exist focussing on this construction choice.

8. There appears to be no similar analysis for Spanish conversation; however, there has been a temporal analysis done by Johnson (1976) for Spanish and English using narratives. The main focus was on the psycholinguistic factors that affect speech production, although
   > Other factors such as articulation rate, phonology, linguistic structure, emotional causes of variation in temporal measurements, their effect being reflected in speech rate, pause and hesitation phenomena...(Johnson, 1976, Abstract)

   This would be a valuable beginning point for anyone undertaking detailed analyses of oral Spanish.

9. Iuliano, in classifying her periphrastic data from oral Spanish conversations, notes that one function of this construction is to act as a filler or "muletilla." Most common was vamos a decir alternating with digamos ('let's say...'), with the latter having a significantly higher frequency of use. Of the four major functions, this filler function applied to only 9% of the periphrastic data. Constructions with this primary function are not included in this study.

10. It is recognized that there are probably linguistic/cultural variations in the degree of overlap between speakers that may occur. For example, there is the contrapunctual conversations in the West Indies observed by Carl Reisman in which there is very heavy overlap, yet understanding still takes place.

11. This is supported by a number of studies on planned and unplanned written discourse in Ochs Keenan (1977) and in two unpublished papers on oral speech (Reitman, 1978 and van Naerssen, 1978).

12. In the van Naerssen study of the oral language of 27 adult Spanish foreign language learners, after one year of college study, the Periphrastic represented 2% (80/3698) of the 20 constructions examined while the Inflected represented .3% (12/3698), too few to warrant further examination. The accuracy rate for for the Periphrastic was 60% (ranking 8.5 out of 13 and 14 out of 16 in two different orderings) with errors occurring on what should have been the Infinitive (ex. voy a canta instead of voy a cantar). The only Spanish foreign/second language study found in which the Inflected was examined in any detail revealed it to be a difficult construction. In tests of rule knowledge and application for Spanish as a foreign language at the college level (Tapia-Hernandez, 1978), the scores averaged in the 50-60% range for correctness for the Inflected Future. (The Periphrastic was not tested.) On a scale of easy to difficult for rule application (for 60 rules) the Inflected Future fell in the lower 22% (more difficult).

Harley and Swain (1977, and 1978) suggest that a similar reality exists in Canadian French for second language learners with a preference for the periphrastic.

13. The texts examined were:

Allen/Sandstedt/Wegmann, 1954
Angel/Dixson, 1954
Castells/Lionetti, 1978
Christensen/Wolfe, 1977
Crow, 1979
Dalbor, 1972
DaSilva, 1978
DaSilva, 1980
Jarrett/McManus 1953
Keller/Sebastiani/Jimenez, 1978
La Grone/Mildenberger/O'Connor, 1970
LaMadrid/Bull/Briscoe, 1974
Maqueo, 1979
Modern Language Materials Development Center, 1961 (and later levels)
Turk/Espinosa/Solé, 1978
Valencia/Merlonghi, 1980

14. "Early" and "late" were not defined precisely in terms of a percentage of material or number of pages as the texts were not comparable in size nor in organization. The terms were defined in terms of a rough estimate by the writer. "Early" was roughly in the first third and "late" in the last third of the content of the text.

15. I wish to thank Drs. Stephen Krashen and Tracy Terrell for their comments on an earlier version of this paper; however, I am responsible for any errors that may still persist.

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